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ABSTRACT

This conference addresses the need for British trade to be able to communicate with their customers in their own language. Knowledge of foreign language for trade is necessary if Great Britain is to continue competing with other countries exporting to non-English speaking markets. Industry and education at the regional and local level must work together to bring about an improvement in foreign language skills in industry. Conference participants conclude that the slow process of changing national attitudes toward foreign languages in the long term would be greatly assisted if broadcasting and television companies adopted a more encouraging policy towards their use in parts of normal programs. They suggest that (1) interviews with foreign language speakers not be dubbed but instead have subtitles, (2) brief items in the main foreign languages be transmitted at peak viewing times, (3) news programs in French and German are televised too late for the majority of those who would like to see them, and (4) it is important that British people experience other languages as a normal part of everyday life. (JK)

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The Language Key in Export Strategy

Report of a Conference held on Monday 12 January 1981 at The Birmingham Chamber of Industry and Commerce

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Conference Chairmen:

Lord Limerick MA CA
Chairman of the British Overseas Trade Board

Sir Adrian Cadbury MA Hon DSc
Chancellor of the University of Aston in Birmingham
Chairman of Cadbury Schweppes Limited

FL 012 704

Department of Modern Languages
The University of Aston in Birmingham
Birmingham

October 1981

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INTRODUCTION

Up to about ten years ago our export outlets were mainly other English-speaking countries. Recently there has been a complete change in the pattern of exports so that today over 50% of our goods go to non English-speaking markets, and the increase in the number of multinational companies, joint ventures and take-overs means that many men and women in the U.K. have or will have a need to communicate with foreigners during the course of their careers. For many of those who already speak a foreign language it seems that many British businessmen give themselves an unnecessary additional difficulty to contend with if they refrain from using the appropriate language, or if they still believe that all foreigners prefer to use English as the business language.

Progressive industrialists, aware of the problem, are beginning to invest more in 'crash' language courses. Others lose business by not doing so. Yet it would seem that the educational system of the country, its schools and universities, should be able to provide appropriately trained and educated manpower; languages are taught in many if not most educational institutions. From education, however, comes an alarming picture of a steady decrease in the number of school-leavers able to use a language effectively. In 1979 several reports appeared of conferences and meetings which had been held to discuss this problem; many of these are summarised in a booklet by C. Wilding: Languages, Education and Industry, which was prepared for a conference held at the University of Aston on March 22nd 1980, at which the participants suggested a meeting for those engaged in formulating policy, particularly in the export field, in companies in the West Midlands. Hence the present conference, held on January 12th 1981.

Those present in January were insistent that the outcome of this conference would not be limited to the present report. It is hoped to convene a further meeting in order to explore further some of the specific problems which have been identified; in the meantime it is clear that action has already been taken in some sectors of education - for example, the "Understanding British Industry" scheme is looking at languages in secondary schools; and there have been meetings in the Birmingham area for those involved in language teaching in Further Education. Other schemes are under discussion.

The present report has been prepared from the conference record; the costs of distribution have been met by a grant from the British Overseas Trade Board and the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Aston.

DENNIS AGER
University of Aston
November 1981

Letter sent by Sir Adrian Cadbury to senior executives of Midlands companies of varying sizes and different manufacturing sectors accompanied by the invitation below.

The University of Aston in Birmingham, Gosta Green, Birmingham B4 7ET/Telephone 021.359 3611

From the Chancellor, Sir Adrian Cadbury, MA, Hon DSc.

On the PM Programme on Radio 4 in July, Michael Ward of Courtaulds stressed how emphatically they have profited in their East European Operations from knowing the languages of their clients.

In a speech to Malvern college recently, John Osola, Chief Executive and Managing Director of the Redman Heenan Group, made a plea for foreign languages to be made central to the selling strategies of British companies.

Anthony Frodsham, Director General of the Engineering Employers' Federation, said at a seminar at Aston University in March this year: "Whilst companies in other countries always staff their Sale Departments with English and other speakers, this is certainly not true of the Buying Department with whom one has to deal when exporting".

The Duke of Kent chaired a Study Group of the British Overseas Trade Board which produced a Report on Foreign Languages for Overseas Trade. In this respect, the BOTB has invited regional effort - and the West Midlands can pave the way.

At the University of Aston we want to play our part in helping industry and commerce achieve success. We are as frustrated as anybody else by the evidence of educational and training failures - by the stories of British industry missing out (in comparison with our overseas competitors) through foreign language attitudes which range from the lordly to the resigned and the apologetic.

We therefore invite you to the Seminar: The Language Key in Export Strategy.

At Aston over the last 18 months we have been researching into the use made of foreign languages in industry and commerce, the needs and demands involved and collecting information on the language provisions available to industry throughout the West Midlands. Now we want the focus of this to be sharpened by senior executives, who can assess the pay-off for their own business. The seminar will give them the information they need to devise their own language-led export strategy.

Some of the people who share our concern, and will be present, are:

- Lord Limerick, Chairman of the BOTB, with whom I shall Chair this meeting;
- Sir Norman Statham, former H.M. Ambassador to Brazil;
- Anthony Frodsham, Director General of the Engineering Employers' Federation;
- Keith Brauer, Director General of the Institute of Sales Management;
- David Owen, President of the Birmingham Chamber of Industry and Commerce.

The programme sets out the areas of work: A review of the problem:-

- from overseas
- from the BOTB
- from the Chief Executive

Experience, problems and solutions from West Midlands' companies:

Suggestions for action:

- in education
- in employment
- in training

Comment on the programme, by way of supplementary statement o questions for consideration would be welcome, to reach us before the Seminar. Please enquire, if you would like to bring a colleague. Numbers will have to be limited to give everyone a chance of taking an active part, but the more experience and interest brought to bear the better.

Sir Adrian Cadbury
Chancellor of the University of Aston
Lord Limerick
Chairman of the British Overseas Trade Board
have the honour of inviting you to a Seminar

THE LANGUAGE KEY IN EXPORT STRATEGY

on Monday January 12th 1981 at 11.15 am for 11.30 am
at the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce
75 Harborne Road, Birmingham B15 3DH
RSVP to Sir Adrian Cadbury, University of Aston in Birmingham (AMLC)
Gosta Green, Birmingham B4 7ET
enclosing remittance payable to AMLC £15 including VAT

Coffee, Lunch, Tea, Information Dossier

THE PROGRAMME

The Seminar is organised in order to provide information and to share views on how best to devise and assess action in language-led export strategy.

11.00 Arrival. Coffee

11.30 Introduction and welcome by Sir Adrian Cadbury

Review of the Problem:

From overseas:
Sir Norman Statham,
retired HM Ambassador to Brazil

From the BOTB Study Group on Foreign Languages:
Nigel Reeves,
University of Surrey, Member of the Group

From the Chief Executive:
John Osola,
Chief Executive, Redman Heenan Group

Discussion

1.00 - 2.00 Lunch

2.00 Lord Limerick takes the chair

Experience, problems and solutions from West Midlands Companies:

David Owen,
President of the Birmingham Chamber of Industry and Commerce

Michael Ward,
Trading Manager, Courtaulds Central Trading Limited

Anne Kelly,
Management Assistant and Linguist,
James Fairley & Sons Limited

David James,
General Manager Car & Motorsport Development, Dunlop Ltd

George Hardwick,
Licensing Manager, GKN Screws and Fasteners Limited

Discussion

3.10 Proposals for action:

Mr Anthony Frodsham, Director-General Engineering Employers' Federation leads a panel of speakers who will present proposals for future consideration.

In education:
Peter Downes,
Headmaster Henry Box School, Witney

In training:
Dennis Ager,
Professor of Modern Languages, University of Aston

In deployment of resources:
Keith Brauer,
Director-General of the Institute of Sales Management

4.00 Discussion and summary

4.30 Lord Limerick, Chairman of the BOTB concludes

4.50 Tea. Depart

5.00 - 5.30 Press conference

Organising Committee

Dennis Ager, Head of Department of Modern Languages, University of Aston in Birmingham

Keith Brauer, Director-General of the Institute of Sales Management

Sir Adrian Cadbury, Chancellor of the University of Aston in Birmingham and Chairman, Cadbury Schweppes Limited

Anthony Frodsham, Director-General of the Engineering Employers' Federation

David Liston, Education Advisor, British Overseas Trade Board

Nigel Reeves, Head of Department of Linguistics and International Studies, University of Surrey

in consultation with the University of Aston, Department of Modern Languages Steering Committee on research in foreign languages in industry and commerce in the West Midlands: Professor D.E. Ager, Mr. K. Brauer, Mr. C. Checkley, Dr. E. Clavering, Professor F. Knowles, Mr. A. Toutoungi, Mr. M. Ward, Mrs. C. Wilding.

INTRODUCTION
by
The Chairman, Sir Adrian Cadbury

I am very glad to welcome you to this Conference on behalf of the organising committee - members of the BOTB Study Group and from the University of Aston. It follows up a successful conference for headteachers held at the University last year on "Foreign Languages for Overseas Trade and its Implications for Schools". I am particularly grateful to Anthony Frodsham, Director-General of the E.E.F. and Professor Ager of Aston, both of whom took part in that Conference and have agreed to take part in this one, so that we can draw on what we learnt from last year's discussion.

It was encouraging for me to learn for example that the examination syllabus has been altered to recognise the importance of being able to hold a conversation in a foreign language, although these new examination options are only being taken up slowly. We also had a useful discussion on what industry and commerce expected from the schools in the way of language training, an exchange of views which brought out areas of misunderstanding on both sides and some criticism of companies for not making better use of the people we do take on with language skills.

That Conference was the first step in following up the BOTB Report of which we will hear more during today's session. The natural follow-on was to arrange a Conference for business users of languages to discuss practical ways of implementing the Report's findings within our companies.

If you want one overriding reason why we should improve our language skills and use them to better advantage, it is that the pattern of our trade is changing. Traditionally our strongest markets were the Commonwealth and the United States, which enabled us and them to duck most of the problems of language. But during the 1970's British exports to South Africa, Australia, U.S.A. and Canada fell, while they increased to West Germany, France, Switzerland and the Netherlands. Looking ahead if Europe is to fulfill its promise, it will increasingly become our home market and so this switch of trade from English-speaking to non-English speaking countries will continue. The newer markets which will also be growing fast in the years ahead are those of Latin America, S.E. Asia and the Middle East; none of which as national consciousness grows are likely to prove responsive to being taken for granted in English.

Along with this switch in the geographical pattern of trade goes the fact that the competition for that trade is becoming fiercer all the time. We have to match the selling skills of our foreign competitors just to retain our place in the export markets of the world, quite apart from the fact that we must plan on the basis of strong sterling for the foreseeable future. Given this task we

cannot afford the additional handicap of relying on English loud and clear.

As the German Trade Minister said:-

> If you wish to buy from us there is no need to speak German.
> But if you wish to sell to us . . . . .

I put the emphasis on the need for those who market and sell our products abroad to have the appropriate language skills. Technicians operating abroad need to be fluent in their own special subject, but that will require a relatively limited vocabulary. In any case having specialist interests in common goes a long way towards breaking down the barriers of language.

It is in the fields of marketing and selling that it is essential for our representatives to be fully at home commercially and socially in the language of their market.

I think it is also an advantage for senior managers, even though at their level English may be more readily accepted as the basic international business language, perhaps because so much of its jargon is coined in the United States anyway. I am convinced of the value of being able to get something of the feel of a market through going round shops, using public transport and reading posters and newspapers.

The essential conclusion I hope we can draw from today's discussions is how to make the best use of the language resources we have and what practical steps we can take to make our selling effort abroad more effective. We for example supplement our in-company language resources by using outside translation services and outside courses and by hiring outside specialists for particular tasks such as to put over our advertising strategy in Japan. It is therefore the mix between internal and external language resources, which we are aiming to make the most of.

The object of the Conference is for our companies to become more competitive in developing their business abroad. The test of its usefulness will be the action we put in hand tomorrow as a result of coming here today.

REVIEW OF THE PROBLEM

From Overseas

Sir Norman Statham, retired H.M. Ambassador to Brazil

At a BOTB conference, on Languages and Export Performance, held at the Royal Society of Arts in October 1979, the Chairman of the Council of the Society (which, among other things, administers BETRO, the British Export Trade Research Organisation) quoted from the Society's Journal of a century before, September 1879:

> Beyond all doubt, we suffer in competition abroad from ignorance of foreign languages by our merchants, agents, clerks and mechanics. Although there are so many teachers of school French and German, the want of provision of practical training in these and other important languages is seriously felt throughout the country.

It is now many years ago, 15 or 20 maybe, that the Economist recorded that in a survey of its members, conducted by a certain Chamber of Commerce, some members had been honest enough to reply to a question about how they handled enquiries received in a foreign language by admitting that they threw them in the wastepaper basket.

More recently - 7 or 8 years ago - I remember seeing a copy of a reply addressed by a well-known British fashion designer to a purchasing enquiry from a German company. I do not have the text. But it ran more or less in this way:

> I have to acknowledge your letter of 25 October, which, since it is datelined Berlin, I suppose to be written in German. Nobody in this organisation understands that language. If therefore you wish to do business with us, kindly address us in English.

Some few years ago a British businessman told me of a conversation he had had with a member of the Board of one of the very largest German companies, whose English is to my knowledge pretty proficient. After a minute of two of general conversation in English, the German had said:

> Well, do you want to buy something or sell me something. If you want to buy, we can go on in English. If I am to buy something, I should be glad if we could talk German.

Mr. Chairman, you have reminded us of Count Lambsdorff's recent remarks on the same lines. That attitude is becoming more prevalent in Germany.

It would be nice to think that what was not uncommon practice 15 years ago is unthinkable today. Of course, it is relatively easy to establish in any firm, even the small one, the machinery for dealing with foreign correspondence. If you haven't got and cannot afford to have the expertise available in the company, there are plenty of organisations who will undertake the job on a one-off or a more regular basis. It is certainly better to do this than to rely

on inadequate knowledge within the company, as appeared to have been done with one letter which I saw in Germany, sent by a large firm of steel stockists in reply to an enquiry from a German company; it seemed to have been written by somebody with a year or two's school German, relying in a rather inexpert way on a German dictionary for any word beyond the simplest. The result was gibberish, understandable only to somebody who could guess from the German what the underlying English text had said. There is no real substitute for having your written material done by, or checked by, a properly literate native speaker, a message which was not borne in mind, even as late as 1978, by one of the largest and most important British Chambers of Commerce in organising a Trade Mission to Brazil; the very well printed and expensive introductory brochure which posts in Brazil were asked to circulate to the local press and prospective contacts had to be scrapped, partly because of a series of uncorrected printing errors, and partly because the text itself, even before these errors, had been inexpertly translated and in some cases would have meant nothing at all to a Portuguese speaker.

The BOTB's report on Foreign Languages for Overseas Trade very rightly makes the point that in many cases correspondence, especially the initial correspondence or the literature with which a British firm introduces itself to a prospective new customer or client needs to be in the customer's language.

> 50% of French firms consulted give preference - other things being equal - to a foreign firm which first approaches them in their own language.
>
> 50% of German and Austrian firms consulted require correspondence in German.
>
> In a number of medium-sized markets in Western Europe and South America the exporter relying on English alone is likely to be at a severe disadvantage.

And the British Chamber of Commerce in France wrote in its Policy Statement of 1979:

> It is a well known fact that in order to carry out business in France even at top-reaching levels it is essential to speak French.

Yet, the replies from British firms to export opportunity notices published by the BOTB's Export Intelligence Service are still - or were in 1978 - to a disturbingly high proportion written in English. 73% for Germany, 90% for Austria, 95% for Spain, between 90-100% for Brazil. I certainly believe that even in markets like these you stand a better chance of success by writing a letter in good English than in thoroughly bad German or Portuguese, (- and it isn't of much help to address a Brazilian firm in Spanish); but when it is possible to write in perfectly good German or French or Portuguese, either by harnessing

properly the resources you already have within your own company or by using somebody outside, why miss a trick? Can you be thought serious if you are not prepared to use German or Spanish or whatever language you need? Would you be impressed if, as an importer, you got a letter out of the blue in French or Portuguese?

Speaking, and understanding a foreign language when spoken, is a different matter. You can of course, if you need to, - and there will almost certainly be occasions in a businessman's overseas operations when he will have to - operate through an interpreter, perhaps one specially employed, perhaps your own agents or some other existing contact. Anybody who has been in this position, or who has seen a meeting go off the rails owing to faulty interpretation, will wish to keep such occasions to the minimum.

On the one hand it is evidently unreasonable to expect an individual senior manager to master a <u>number</u> of foreign languages in addition to all the other burdens which are put upon him. And it is tempting to rely on the ability of the other fellow to speak English - which in so many cases he will do perfectly well. Let us consider, on the other hand, some of the disadvantages of a company's relying only on English. To me it looks rather like this:

a) you are dealing with a market through an agent. By having to deal with him in English, you may at the outset have had to choose a second-best agent, rather than the more active and better introduced firm, which copes better, or only, in its own language. Even if this is not so, you cut yourself off from many alternative sources of information and knowledge about that country.

b) you are dealing with a particular customer or client on an important contract. You can so easily be dependent for a knowledge of that firm's needs and intentions on the man or men there who speak the best English. Your French or German or Japanese competitor may be speaking to the people who are really going to decide the issue.

c) you are travelling to investigate a new market. You will, we hope, have been in touch with the official services; they will have suggested contacts for you. You will manage in some centres in English; other areas will be nearly closed to you. In Brazil for instance you will be able to interview lots of people in Rio or São Paulo or Brasilia. Even there however you may not be able to see absolutely the right man, because he doesn't or prefers not to speak English. You will find it much more difficult to have any satisfactory investigation at all in Salvador or Recife or Porto Alegre or Belo Horizonte. You may not <u>want</u> to go to any of these places; it is limiting to

think you can't. A man's usefulness in my embassy was greatly reduced until he had good or at least confident Portuguese, which meant he could go anywhere and see anybody.

d) Whatever the reason for your being in the country you will enjoy yourself more if you understand and speak the language. You may understand from the English language press something of what goes on around you, but without its language you are much less likely to understand the country, its people, its concerns and attitudes and, in the old phrase, what makes it tick. And, even at its lowest - and this is an important point - if you have some knowledge - and you can probably rapidly pick up more with use - you can keep some sort of control on any translator or interpreter you may still need to use.

e) Finally, whether you like it or not, you are guilty of a discourtesy. The attitude of my German boardmember, which I mentioned at the beginning of my talk, is illustrative. If you are trying to buy something - as you are buying a service when you visit a country as a tourist - you are, in my view, entitled to manage in your own language, or whatever other way you can contrive. If you are lucky enough to be operating in a seller's market - a rare occurrence these days - you may feel no obligation to do more than to speak English. But if you are trying to sell something to somebody it seems a matter of courtesy as well as common prudence to show him you have taken some trouble over him. And, if you do not, and if what you are selling is something he is not sure that he wants, or which he can get as cheaply, as quickly as well elsewhere, you are asking for trouble yourself. There is sure to be some devoted German or clever Frenchman or subtle Japanese around who has done his homework.

An Ambassador sees what goes wrong in his own embassy more easily than he sees what the other embassy is messing up. In the same way, he hears more of the failings of his own compatriots in business than he does of those of his competitors. He will hear that company X from Nottingham lost a contract because of incompetence; he will not so easily hear the same of company Z from Osaka. The Japanese embassy will hear that. I have always tended to discount a great deal of the criticism I have heard, and I do not believe that the American or German businessman is necessarily cleverer or better than the British one. So, by taking this basic trouble over the foreign customer and contriving the ability to speak to him in his own language, you may not only be stopping your competitor from scoring a point against you; you can be scoring one yourself. And, although I am not a devotee of the doctrine that

exporting is fun, it is more fun than it would be if you speak the language of the country.

Now, as I have suggested earlier, it is not practicable for one man to know all the languages that may be needed in the course of a large firm's activities. Equally it is not necessary for all those in a company who are concerned with selling to France to read, write and speak French to the same standard. The desirable standard needs to be worked out for the individual case. Basically it is what is required to give one a significantly enhanced chance of doing business; and at some point in most cases, the law of diminishing returns will begin to operate.

It is however perhaps worth bearing in mind the system in operation in the Diplomatic Service designed not only to encourage an officer to learn a language but to keep it up. An annual allowance is paid at differing levels, according to the standard reached and the difficulty of the language, to anybody who has passed an examination and is actually making use of the language in the country concerned; a continuing allowance at reduced rate is paid to somebody who is not actually using the language at the time, but who shows, in examination, that he still maintains his original standard.

Let me conclude. In some markets and in dealing with some firms it is essential to use the local language rather than English. In others, it is not so necessary - but, as the BOTB report puts it, even in such cases, "it may save valuable time, prevent misunderstandings, and make it easier to build up useful contacts". It is worthwhile for an ambassador and the embassy staff, even in a place like Copenhagen or Stockholm, to speak Danish or Swedish. In Brazil, one of the countries most used to doing business in English, because of the past American influence, 25 out of 61 firms consulted by the Consulates General in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, said they would give preference to foreign firms who first approached them in Portuguese, and 17 out of 61 said they prefer to deal with foreign firms prepared to deal in Portuguese. So, even there, you are at a clear disadvantage with something like a third of your potential customers if English is all you know. In too many cases around the world, inadequate knowledge of a local language is likely to make the difference between a contract won and a contract lost, a venture which gets off the ground and one which obstinately gets stuck.

If I may be allowed one final parting remark. I hear from schoolmasters and university lecturers of the apparently greater facility in modern languages shown by young women in comparison with young men. There are possible explanations of this phenomenon, which need not concern us here. But I do not think that in 16 to 17 years spent overseas between 1954 and 1979 - always in a job,

even as ambassador, connected with trade promotion - I came across a single British female export representative. Given the considerable success of young ladies as foreign linguists, you may think that it would be right for them to play a much greater role than hitherto in the export departments of our major companies.

REVIEW OF THE PROBLEM

The B.O.T.B. Report on Foreign Languages for Overseas Trade and Beyond
Professor Nigel Reeves, member of the BOTB Study Group on Foreign Languages

This important conference marks the culmination of a series of conferences that have been held over the past three years to illuminate the key significance of foreign language capability in exporting to non English-speaking markets. Of these perhaps the most discussed was that chaired by Sir John Hedley Greenborough of the C.B.I., held at the R.S.A. in October, 1979 and opened by H.R.H. the Duke of Kent.

Its purpose was to review and publicise the findings of two sister reports. The first, Foreign Languages for Overseas Trade, was prepared for the B.O.T.B. by a Study Group chaired by the Duke of Kent himself and consisting of leading industrialists, government official and academics. The second more detailed report was sponsored by the BETRO Trust of the Royal Society of Arts and was the result of extensive interviews with 200 exporting companies covering both manufacturing and service sectors. The first concentrated on large and multinational companies and also examined potential foreign customers' expectations of British exporters by consulting the commercial sections of British Embassies. The companies interviewed for the second were mostly in the medium range and included a substantial number (60% of the sample) of Queen's Award winners.

Why has there been such interest in recent years in the role of foreign languages in exporting? The answer lies in the disturbing coincidence of three factors:

1) The marked decline in the U.K.'s share of the world market in manufacturing exports over recent decades, a decline <u>not</u> shared by two of our largest trading partners and neighbours, France and Germany, and not, therefore, typical of what has sometimes been called the post-industrial period. In 1962 Britain still had 15.5% of world manufacturing trade, France 9%, and Germany 19.2%. By 1977 Britain's share had dropped to 9.3%, while France had marginally increased to 9.8% and Germany to 20.7%.
2) The dramatic switch in Britain's trading away from English speaking markets to non-English speaking markets such as the European Community which alone now takes over 50% of all exports, while only 26% go to N. America and the Commonwealth.
3) Perversely, in precisely the same period, the number of schoolchildren sitting and obtaining passes in foreign languages at the 'O' and 'A' level, has declined relative to the numbers of the age group, languages such as Russian now being on the point of extinction as a schools subject.

In the last year a further factor has entered which makes our deliberations today all the more urgent: from 1967 British exporters tended to compensate for relatively low productivity by competing on price as sterling steadily and sometimes startingly lost international value. Today we have a strong petro-currency, although productivity and unit cost have not improved. We have perforce, therefore, to compete on the basis of quality and what may have been a mere marginal factor - the foreign language capability of our sales and marketing staff - has rapidly become central. And here is perhaps the place to refute one very common fallacy - that the advantage of speaking a language is being able simply to communicate and so to sell. Equally vital is the access that a serious and contemporary knowledge of a language gives to a country's culture and thus its mentality and its potential as a market - a point made forcibly by the Chairman of Rowntrees, Sir Donald Barron at the R.S.A. conference in 1979.

The Report prepared for the B.O.T.B. came to some clear conclusions: most illuminating of all were the considered opinions of the ambassadors and their commercial counsellors. Those in countries where French, Spanish, German, Portuguese and Italian were spoken all stated unequivocally that not to correspond and not to negotiate (at least initially) in the foreign language was a disadvantage, often a fatal disadvantage. Replies to export opportunities published by the B.O.T.B. Export Intelligence Service were reported to be mostly in English though it was known that English replies were less likely and often very unlikely to receive any serious attention. In short, British companies appear, in the view of commercial counsellors operating in foreign markets, not to appreciate the centrality of a foreign language capability. This opinion was corroborated by exporters from France and Germany interviewed in the Barclays Bank International report published in the same year.

The B.O.T.B. Report also noted that colleges had under-utilised language training facilities and that communication between industry and colleges was not very successful.

What steps are being taken to train the export labour force of the future in foreign languages? What is the situation of modern language teaching and learning in the schools? Today more children than ever before start learning a foreign language (90% of all children and almost invariably French). But after 3 - 4 years and before any qualification has been obtained only 35% continue to study and a mere 10% obtain an 'O' level or a C.S.E. grade 1. Only one-sixth or 17% of these few continue to 'A' level and that percentage is falling, while as a proportion of the total 'A' level entry French has dropped from 6.94% in 1966 to 4.52% in 1976, and German from 1.98% in 1966 to 1.45% in 1976.

The numbers studying French at 'O' level have not increased in proportion to the numbers in the age group (1970 - 145,930; 1979 - 154,791), though German shows a very modest but welcome increase (1970 - 34,981; 1979 - 46,498). The gross imbalance in numbers between French and German is self-evident and remains unchanged.

A further interesting, or worrying, feature - according to your standpoint - is that advanced sixth-form studies of languages are followed by twice as many girls as boys. This is having the effect of making language skills increasingly the property of the female labour force alone in an employment area (and I am speaking here of export sales) that is traditionally male.

Let us now move from the learners to the teachers. Despite newspaper reports on teachers being made redundant and others finding no jobs there is a critical shortage not only of mathematics and science teachers but also of foreign language staff. French is least vulnerable here but German and Spanish are in very short supply while it is common knowledge that far too much French is taught, especially at lower levels, by teachers with no more than an 'O' level.

Lastly, in response to cuts in central government support, local education authorities are cutting out that part of teaching personnel that can claim no redundancy pay and has no union - the colloquial assistants who are often the only authentic contact a pupil has with the living language and the contemporary country.

Turning now to existing management, the BETRO Report has shown, unfortunately, that present export staffs have no surplus of FL capability to compensate for this, indeed they have no more than a minimal or sub-minimal capability. Only 62% of export directors, 57% of export sales managers, 42% of export salesmen, 43% of marketing directors and a mere 28% of service engineers have some linguistic ability: that does not mean that they necessarily have any FL qualifications. Probably they have not. Considering that only 26% of our exports now go to English-speaking markets this is an unhappy picture.

But significantly Queen's Award winners employed 90% of all language graduates in the sample of manufacturing companies and generally showed a substantially higher language capability in French, German, Italian and Russian (though curiously not in Spanish) than non-award winners. The correlation, then, between success today and hiring staff with a FL ability is plain.

Yet, amazingly, the same sample showed that this ability was only seventh priority among the criteria for selecting export staff, one point ahead of 'knowledge of specific countries'. G.C.E. Boards will be cheered to hear that

formal language qualifications were below both these and ninth on the list, scoring only 8% of all mentions.

What remedies are possible? I sincerely hope that one major remedy will be embarked upon as a result of today - a continuing detailed dialogue and collaboration between local industry and the schools and colleges of the area that serve it and wish to serve it. We in education want to learn more about industry's language needs - we would like you also to know more about how FL's are taught today, our problems and what we have to offer. The BETRO Report discovered, for example, that companies are very negative towards language graduates. Universities such as Aston and my own, Surrey, and many polytechnics, do not seem yet to have succeeded in publicising their degree courses, which differ radically from the literary image clearly imprinted on the minds of those interviewed for the Report.

In the schools younger children need to be encouraged by exams that stress their achievement, not their failure, and geared to pupils' varying speeds in acquiring skills, such as has long been the case with music. Local authorities should be encouraged to introduce graded examinations for the 13, 14 and 15 year olds like those in Oxfordshire, West Sussex and elsewhere.

At 16+ it is imperative that our young specialist scientists and mathematicians do not give up their languages. In minority time they should be helped to go on, for example, to the Oxford and Cambridge AO levels in French or German for Business Studies. The London Chamber is prepared to offer its Foreign Languages for Industry and Commerce (FLIC) examination, which is oral only, to schools that apply to it, while the R.S.A. has well proven exams for young people who intend to become bilingual secretaries or export clerks.

In view of the very worrying absence of language expertise among our future engineers, however, the B.O.T.B. is proposing to sponsor a new non-examined course in languages for non-specialist linguists that will give employers not a grade achieved on an arbitrary examination day but a performance profile showing ability and development in the principal language skills.

At university and polytechnic level we need more candidates for combined courses of the kind on offer here at Aston or Bath or Surrey or courses in ancillary languages for engineers such as the pilot scheme recently sponsored by the E.E.F. at Surrey.

I can say that the successor to the B.O.T.B. Study Group is to continue to meet despite cutbacks and has as its purpose the active encouragement and monitoring of all such projects and collaboration. It will be reporting directly to the Board itself. We would be glad to receive enquiries or information about initiatives from companies, colleges and schools alike.

REVIEW OF THE PROBLEM

From the Viewpoint of the company Chief Executive

V. John Osola, Group Chief Executive, Redman Heenan International Limited

Introduction

Before I start to discuss the principal theme of my talk, I should like to tell you a true story which came to my mind during Christmas, when I remembered the popular song which was published four or five years ago, called "Two Little Boys".

My story concerns two little boys who were cousins and were brought up together during the 1930's. Both were members of a family where dual nationality existed and where foreign visitors were in their homes almost daily. One of the boys was educated in Finland and the other in England and due to the war they lost touch with each other for over twenty years. When they met again in the sixties both were occupying senior positions in business in their respective countries. Despite the fact that they had both graduated at old-established universities in their own countries, there was one major difference - that concerned their language ability: both spoke fluent English; one of them also spoke fluent Swedish, Finnish, German and Russian; the other, however, spoke schoolboy French and schoolboy German.

I need hardly tell you which of these two boys I was and why I feel that there is something fundamentally wrong with our whole approach to foreign language teaching in this country.

The Problem - from the business point of view

The United Kingdom is one of the world's greatest trading nations. Indeed we live by foreign trade. Traditionally, our major trading position in the world was built on exports to English-speaking countries, particularly those of the old Commonwealth. The world trading scene has changed very much in the last twenty five years in that a number of formerly underdeveloped countries have now industrialised and a number of important trading communities have come into existence. The trading pattern has become complex and inter-connected, and the days when British businessmen could look for almost automatic export business through well-established merchant houses in distant lands have long since passed.

We are now competing for business against our traditional competitors such as Germany and France and in addition we now face highly professional competition from Japan, Taiwan, Korea and the Scandinavian countries, as well as from other countries of the E.E.C.

It does not require research to establish the fact that foreign language capability is more developed in all these countries than in the United Kingdom.

We are bottom of the league as far as foreign language capability is concerned and if we cannot communicate with our customers, how are we to understand their needs and how are we to persuade them to buy our products in preference to those of one of our competent foreign competitors?

There are other aspects to this problem, however, from the business point of view, which go far beyond the mere question of communication. The other aspects are, in my view, subtle and serious. They include some of the following:

The first is what I call the 'League Division 2 Effect'. It results from the erosion of self-confidence which is very often experienced by otherwise competent British business people abroad when they find themselves isolated in international gatherings because they are the only people present who are unable to speak freely to their foreign colleagues in their own languages. Typically, the Scandinavians speak German and English well and the Germans speak French, Spanish, Italian and English; equally the French frequently speak Spanish and German. In this situation our people find themselves in an isolated position. This diminishes their self-confidence and they assume the stance of a less competent fringe participant despite the fact that they may be professionally the most competent and have the finest products and technology of anyone present.

The second damaging side effect is the engendering of a parochial attitude in many British companies: the failure to recognise that the United Kingdom is one important component in a bustling international community. This failure to think internationally has led to many British companies avoiding (unconsciously, perhaps) a full business presence in E.E.C. countries and the tendency to fall back on old familiar markets such as the English-speaking Commonwealth and former Colonial territories.

The third adverse side effect is closely related to the second and almost amounts to an unconscious political isolationism based on lack of knowledge of language and of the inherited cultural heritage of our partners in the European Economic Community. There is an evident lack of commitment in Britain to the European ideal and this has an adverse effect on business attitudes based on lack of knowledge of the environment in which we should be conducting business. In my view this is in total contrast to the attitude of the European or Scandinavian businessman visiting Britain. He sometimes appears to know as much about current public issues in the U.K. as our own residents do; he knows about our newspapers our television programmes, our major public figures and topics of current interest in this country. This provides an excellent initial point of contact leading into friendly discussions, followed in due course by business discussions.

Discussion of Causes

It is clear from what I have said that I feel very frustrated by the unsatisfactory foreign language teaching situation in this country. The reason for our having arrived at the bottom of the foreign language capability league is possibly beyond analysis and has perhaps to do with our cultural and historical background. There is evident failure on the part of the Department of Education and our schools and universities, coupled with widespread public apathy.

I believe that the situation could be transformed within a decade or two if only a way could be found of focussing attention on the problem at a sufficiently high level in our society and mounting a sustained campaign which in my opinion ought to be actioned at several levels simultaneously, for example:

i Change in public attitudes: maximum use could be made of the evident public interest in foreign holidays - language courses leading up to these. Why could we not have a daily language programme on television at peak viewing time as the Japanese do?

ii Changing the whole approach to foreign language teaching in our schools, starting with the primary schools. We could achieve dramatic success in the same way as we have in the teaching of music in the last 15-20 years if we addressed ourselves to the problem properly. Why should we not have attractive young French or German teachers in every school in the land? I was delighted to see that Eton took this initiative at the beginning of the Autumn Term and Malvern College are also directing new initiatives into this field at the present time.

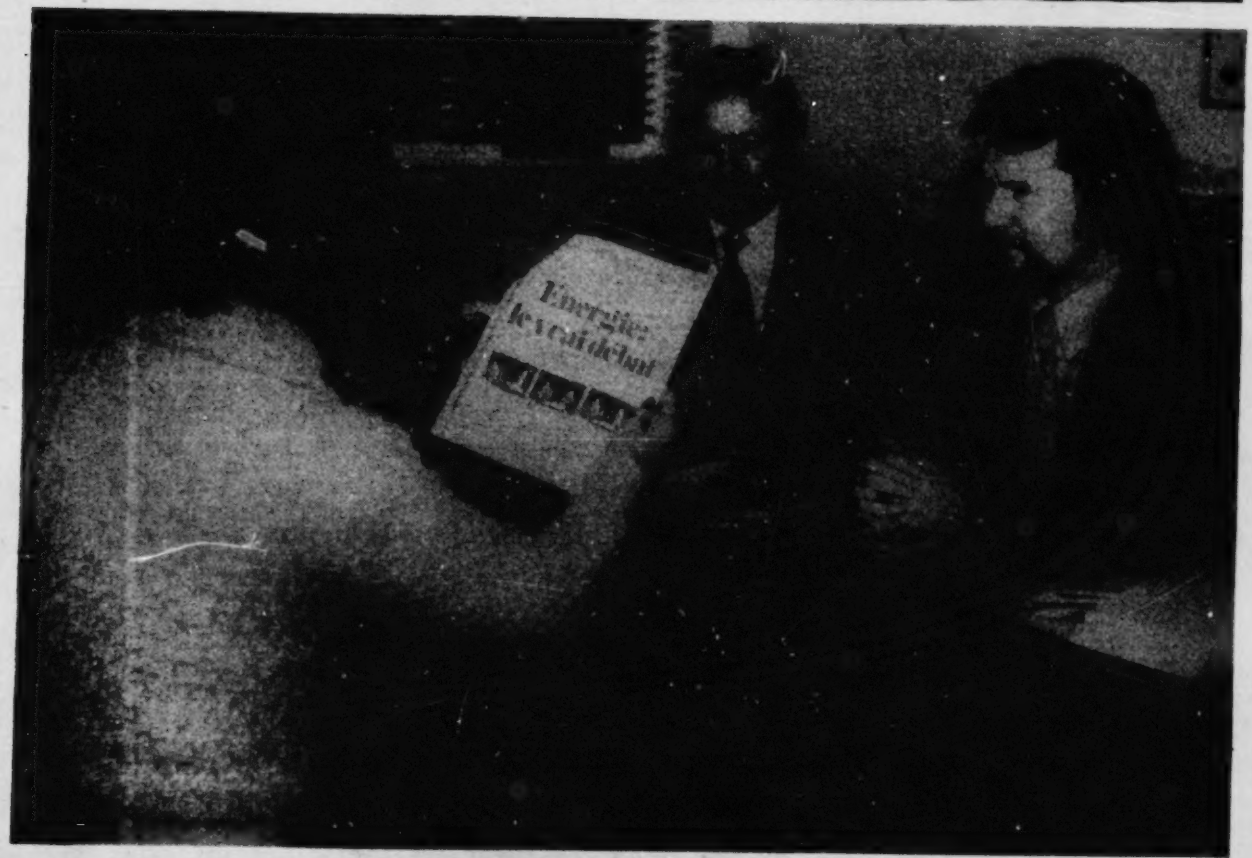
iii Influencing university courses. Why should not fluency in at least one modern European language be a mandatory requirement, alongside English, for entry to any university course?

iv Professional institutions. Why should not all the major professional institutions - the Law, Medicine, Accountancy, Engineering, Architecture, and so on - require a European language fluency as a mandatory requirement, alongside English, for Professional membership?

v Civil Service - competitive entry. Why should not the Civil Service examinations set a new nigh standard of European language fluency as a mandatory requirement for all candidates?

Languages in mid-career - the Redman Heenan Solution

Additionally, we need to consider what is to be done about the people who have already passed through the educational system and are struggling to conduct business in other countries. Many British companies need help and encouragement to tackle this problem in house, making use of their own facilities and external specialised help.



Language training at Redman Heenan where the Board's decision to pilot language training with the Company's own language tutor in 1980 has proved so successful that the scheme is now established in company training.

In my own Group we decided to tackle this problem head-on about a year ago and in the early summer of 1980 a policy decision was taken by the Directors of Redman Heenan International on the vital question of a Group foreign language policy. It was decided to provide for a clear-cut and positive language need in the most comprehensive manner which exists: namely, to establish our own foreign language teaching, information and general orientation service within our own Group. This is the method in which language tuition, plus the attendant information, correspondence and marketing services, is carried out in the majority of companies of any size in continental Europe.

After the Board's decision, the next step was the engagement of a full-time foreign language expert, responsible for the task of identifying and developing linguistic talent and knowledgeability of foreign countries within the Group. Initially, a limited number of gifted people were selected from the ranks of our managers, engineers and sales personnel. It was decided that all lessons should be individual, the degree of weekly tuition to be fairly intensive and the objective to have this small group of 10 persons comfortably effective (as a minimum requirement) in their language by the beginning of June 1981. The languages being studied are French, Spanish and Italian (all of which are tutored by our own tutor consultant Dr. Matheson) and German, for which we have the valued services of an outside tutor.

We are now approaching the end of our first experimental year and the level of success has exceeded our most optimistic hopes. The initial success and basic viability of the project have been demonstrated and we now have very wide horizons upon which to build. We plan to extend and consolidate our language service over the next two or three years; starting from the fundamental but vital point of imaginative extensions to the way in which customer enquiries from overseas should be handled, the foreign language presentation of our products, and the introduction of ourselves to customers in French, German, Italian, the Spanish of Spain and Latin America, through the medium of video. Our aim is to go out and make ourselves and our products better known to them, not wait for them to find us.

To conclude, the policy of an in-company language organisation has been proved to work for our Group; the languages are already being used to an increasing extent in overseas business contacts and enquiries. All of us, the students, the Directors, and the tutor responsible, are absolutely satisfied with the splendid results achieved so far; the practice has proved itself, once again, to be both successful and economically viable.

Our experience so far suggests to us that the <u>ingredients for success</u> in a Group such as ours include:

i) Board commitments to foreign language capabilities as a business tool;

ii) The appointment of full-time in house language tutoring staff - supported by external resources as required;

iii) The selection of students from enthusiastic people whose jobs require enhanced foreign language capability;

iv) In house, job related language sescions in company time to a pre-arranged but flexible timetable;

v) Progressive extension of the service into broader fields as strength is gained.

Conclusion

May I conclude, Mr. Chairman, by saying how important I believe today's conference to be. There has never been a time when it was more important for British business to be international in outlook and to be internationally effective. Language is about communication and if a company's communications are faulty, so is the business. Language capability is also about understanding other people's culture and environment. It leads to an outward looking attitude and a sense of commitment towards the larger family of nations of which we are a part. The League Division 2 attitude and the partial isolation which able British businesspeople travelling abroad often experience is no longer acceptable and we need a multi-pronged attack on this problem, sustained for at least twenty years.

I congratulate the organisers of this event and wish the campaign every success.

For further information on in-company language training at Redman Heenan see case study pamphlet
Matheson, Audrey: One successful approach to solving a foreign language barrier in exporting British engineering products, Redman Heenan International Ltd.,
P.O. Box 29, Shrub Hill Road, Worcester WR4 9EQ, 1981.

DISCUSSION

Following these papers there was short period of time available for discussion at which the following points were raised:

- The need to educate careers advisers, be it the Careers Advisory Service or the teachers advising on careers as to the real needs of industry. There was evidence that school children with foreign language ability had received inadequate advice. Such students should be encouraged to regard languages as a valuable addition to other skills, and to acquire communicative competence to the highest possible level, in more than one foreign language.

- The linguistic talent available in this country is not fully exploited by management, possibly because managers have not evaluated their needs.

- Language training must be regarded as an investment with the full support and encouragement of the Board behind it. It should not be left for the Training Manager to tack it on to general training programmes as an afterthought.

- In the long-term change needs to be introduced in recruitment policy to the stage when language ability will be regarded as essential. In spite of the difficulties caused by the time involved in language learning it is important for both the Board and the language learner to be fully committed and stick to long-term policy.

- It is essential that the problem should be attacked from all angles in recruitment and education, and that foreign languages should be regarded not as a qualification but as a skill.

- Mr. Frodsham pointed to the difficulties he had had to convince the 'unbelievers' that the Engineering Employers' Federation should sponsor engineering students in a course with a language component at the University of Surrey.

- Since 1974 there had been a decline in the number of authorities supporting language advisors. School governors and other bodies should be made aware of the need for languages.

- That since many people who needed languages spent much time travelling and in hotel rooms the idea of carrying and listening to tapes for private language study should become more widespread.

- That occasionally a political 'faux pas' can arise through using a politically sensitive intermediary language in certain countries e.g. Russian in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

- It was agreed that women were indeed generally under-employed in the field of exporting. It was considered by some that they would object to periods of absence overseas and the carrying of heavy samples. There were also some markets in Africa, South America, the Middle East where women would not be accepted.

In introducing the second part of the seminar Lord Limerick drew attention to the need for balance in the choice of foreign languages to be learnt throughout the education system. He pointed out the dangers in assuming that because the Managing Director spoke English so did all his subordinates. Why should we expect foreign buyers to speak English? Surely if you had people with language skills you would be deploying them not as buyers but to sell.

EXPERIENCE, PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE WEST MIDLANDS

From the Birmingham Chamber of Industry and Commerce, David Owen, President

It was with very great pleasure that I accepted the invitation to take part today in an event which has important implications not only for this region but for the country as a whole.

My brief is to speak to you about Birmingham Chamber's role in export promotion and its language services. To take the export side first, this is an aspect of our work which has been particularly important to me during my presidential year. It is entirely fitting that Lord Limerick should be in the Chair for this session as the Chamber has, over the years, developed strong and close links with the B.O.T.B. Both organisations benefit a great deal from the spirit of co-operation which exists between them.

One of my first acts on taking on the presidency of this Chamber in June last year was to inaugurate "Action Plan Europe". This initiative is aimed at securing for member firms a bigger slice of the business potential in the European Economic Community. Seven out of ten of our biggest export markets are in the Common Market, but many U.K. firms are still not taking full advantage of membership.

"Action Plan Europe" has been created to help firms track down information about the Community, and to draw attention to the sales opportunities offered by the Community, institutions themselves.

In order to give practical advice to exporters and potential exporters, the Chamber organises a busy programme of seminars covering various aspects of trading with the Community and further afield, and we provide many opportunities to learn about potential markets and the mechanics of exporting.

I make no apologies for concentrating during these few minutes on the efforts we are making to promote trade with Europe. The E.E.C. market with 200 million people is on Britain's doorstep and at present takes 43% of British manufactured goods. BUT IT COULD TAKE MUCH MORE.

With the success of our "Cavalcade to the Continent" when a group of Midlands businessmen visited the Netherlands by car, we are looking into the

possibility of planning more "Motorcades" to the E.E.C. countries in the first half of this year. Germany, France and Belgium are likely candidates for future forays.

Moving further afield now, the Chamber - with B.O.T.B. backing - organised 17 selling missions, visiting 124 countries during the course of 1980. Firm orders taken by the 205 participants in the Chamber's missions last year totalled £3½ million. In addition, enquiries have been received which are likely to result in a further £42 million of business. Amongst the countries visited were the Philippines and Korea, Cuba and the newly-independent Zimbabwe.

Complementing the mission programme, the Chamber sponsored groups of U.K. exhibitors at nine overseas specialised trade fairs, and the procession of distinguished visitors from abroad to the Chamber reinforces the efforts we are making to help companies realise their export potential.

Particularly with the new exporter in mind, the Chamber is equipped to offer help on many aspects of the mechanics of exporting: guidance on documentation, location of possible agents or major buyers, duties and taxes, licensing, methods of payment and - last in this list but by no means least - the use of foreign languages.

This is necessarily just a very brief run-down of the activities which the Chamber undertakes in an effort to promote overseas trade.

We are clearly very much aware that foreign language knowledge - or should I say the lack of it - is one of the difficulties which the average businessman faces when he becomes involved in export trade.

I believe we shall be hearing of some individual experiences in a moment or two and so I intend to confine myself to a few remarks about what the Chamber can do firstly to assist those firms who are not equipped for a variety of reasons to deal with correspondence, specifications, reports and so forth which come to them in a foreign language. Secondly, I should like to touch on the help we can offer to individuals who wish to "brush up" their knowledge of a particular language or indeed acquire a completely new linguistic skill. Finally I intend to wind-up with a brief reference to what we believe is a most important contribution made by the Chamber of Commerce movement with a view to promoting the acquisition of language skills, namely the development of oral language examinations for the businessman.

The Chamber's own Translations Department is fully equipped to undertake commercial, technical and special translations in the major world languages into or from English. Interpreters can also be supplied for specific projects. This facility is available to all companies, and members of the Chamber and non-

members alike make use of it.

In recent years, a swing away from the "bread and butter" type of translation and interpreting commissions to those of a much more technical nature has been evident in the Department's work. The Department is well geared to meet all companies' language requirements particularly so in the case of the first-time exporter.

Turning to the question of language skills, I do not believe there is any doubt that many of us in this country have an in-built natural reticence when it comes to learning and speaking a foreign language. This has become entrenched over many years.

I believe that we are very well served in this area by both the private language schools and the public education sector in the opportunities they provide for studying a whole range of languages at a variety of levels. What is clear, however, is that many firms and individuals too for that matter are uncertain where and how to go about learning or improving a foreign language.

It is by collecting and providing details of what is "on offer" in the region that we have equipped ourselves to help over the years. The Chamber receives a steady flow of enquiries from members and non-members alike who are interested in acquiring a particular language skill. We are able to assist by pointing enquirers in the direction of those who provide the looked-for tuition.

We are the first to admit that the information we have gathered is unlikely to be wholly comprehensive. Therefore we give a very warm welcome to the initiative which Aston University has taken to build up a full and complete picture of the language teaching facilities in the West Midlands. Undoubtedly this will be invaluable to firms and individuals alike and- not least - to the Chamber.

By way of conclusion, I should like to say a brief word about the oral language examinations for the businessman which were developed and are run by the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Commercial Education Scheme. These will doubtlessly be known to many of you and for those who may not have come across them, I believe that information about the system is given on the display boards in this room.

What may not be common knowledge, is that it was the Birmingham Chamber - prompted by the belief that there was a need for an oral language examination geared to business use - who set the ball rolling initially. The "popularity" of the examinations are a proof of their success and the important niche which they fill in tailoring a qualification to the needs of the business person.

Birmingham Chamber staff co-operate closely with the co-ordinator of these examinations locally and the number of entries from this area are an indication that local business people are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of "THE LANGUAGE KEY IN EXPORT STRATEGY".

I am sure that we all share the hope that the enthusiasm which has brought us together in this room today will be translated into positive action designed to promote not only an awareness of the importance of foreign language knowledge but its acquisition as well.

For further information on the examinations mentioned in David Owen's speech write to Mr. E.V. Lee, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Commercial Education Scheme, Marlowe House, Station Road, Sidcup, Kent, DA15 7BJ

From the man in the field
Michael Ward, Trading Manager, Courtaulds Central Trading Limited

You have already heard some forthright views on our failure as a nation to fulfil our potential as an exporting nation, and you will shortly be hearing the Committee's views on some steps which can be taken towards improving our performance. Today, however, in the few minutes available, I want to talk to you not as a member of the Steering Committee, but as an exporter involved both in regular travelling, and in recruitment and training, also as the employee of a large group where there is inevitably a significant divergence of opinion and attitude towards exporting skills. My own division trades with the communist world and is responsible for a large percentage of Courtaulds' total exports. We have to be highly language orientated, nearly all our people speaking two foreign languages, some more. This is still the exception rather than the rule - two tales of woe from personal experience illustrate this. I remember for example in a previous job with another group company being summoned to the Chairman's office and being asked to move to Italy for a three year secondment. The reason given for this sudden move was that I spoke French and German and was therefore the obvious candidate!

On a more recent occasion when we asked for a senior technician to help out on a job in Bulgaria the only man available did not even have a passport, and when this difficulty had been resolved, he solemnly asked us for written instructions on how to get from Leicester to Coventry station as he had never been there before! It may not surprise you that this man was so nervous, he did a less than satisfactory job. It will horrify you how common an occurrence this is, and how often we see such singularly ill-equipped people alone in export markets.

The many members of today's audience who are widely travelled must surely know the symptoms. To hide our embarrassment, my colleagues and I have made up a game which we play in hotels and airport lounges abroad. It is called Brit-spotting. First you make a so-called superficial appraisal. The scuffed brown attaché case bulging at the seams, trousers at half-mast, only distinguished by their horizontal creases, shirt and tie from the Oxfam shop, brightly patterned socks - occasionally even the battle-scarred Hush-Puppies, fresh from last weekend's gardening.

All too often though the clearest indication is the speak-English-louder syndrome, that bland assumption that those who do not speak our language suffer from all sorts of congenital defects, especially deafness. You must have heard the cry of anguish at "that b..... idiot at the customs who can't speak English" - oh no! you're the b..... idiot for not speaking his language and that applies

equally to Peking as it does to Paris. If you can't speak his language then at least be moderately humble and polite. I accept that the Frenchman is gloriously contemptucus of "BONJEWER", the majority of foreigners will forgive you most of your sins for a brave attempt to greet them in their own tongue, and anyone who masters one of the so-called difficult languages starts with a real psychological edge. The Japanese have still to get over the fact that we have two people who were sufficiently foolhardy to eschew their own language for the horrible complexities of Japanese. We have another salesman, not by any stretch of the imagination a natural linguist, who has had the intelligence and courtesy to master some 50 words of Hungarian; surely one of the aristocrats of difficult languages.

This brings me on to preparing to export. I mentioned recruitment and training earlier on, and many of you must have wondered how other companies go about the job, or whether your own approach is really working. You obviously will always need the type of person who is prepared to learn his 50 words of Hindustani or whatever of his own volition, but there is a far more fundamental question. Do you take a salesman and teach him languages, or do you employ a linguist and teach him the product? That is the simplest question posed today, for it has no answer at all.

What is absolutely certain is that neither approach will work without a disciplined and clearly defined training programme. I mention "disciplined" quite deliberately, because so many good intentions to introduce comprehensive product or language training have fallen by the wayside because of short-term expedients, just as much as they have been missed by not having proper objectives at the outset.

If I asked anyone here today to invest £½ million on a new project or specification, they would laugh; but the executive training policies of many companies are just like that, and employees travelling the world for a few years can cost you £½ million.

So there is a real need for professional exporting staff, and the only way to creat them is by careful personnel selection and good training policies. It does not matter whether you are choosing someone with product knowledge to learn international business and the language skills that are an inherent part of it, or whether you take a language graduate and figuratively, or literally, put him through the mill.

Looking back on what I have said, I am conscious that any attempt to sit in judgement on one's peers is open to the severest criticism, but it may be that such criticism is worth accepting if it leads to a gradual demolition of this country's often complacent attitude to the rest of the world. Speaking-English-

louder is supposed to be a joke. It's not. It's a fact that is costing us orders, and profits, and jobs, and if we have to stand on a pedestal and criticise in order to put this situation right, then so be it.

LANGUAGES OF CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA

From a Steel Company

Lord Limerick

We learnt at the end of last week that our next speaker, ANNE KELLY, has given the only acceptable excuse that she would be unable to participate today as she has to go with her director to France on urgent business.

Anne had been asked to take part as one of the case studies in order to demonstrate how within two years of graduating with a degree in Business Administration and French she is now a useful and - as can in fact be seen by her absence - essential member of her company's team.

Anne joined James Fairley and Sons (generally thought a man's world) at the time when they were being taken over by a French company, Creusot Loire, and suddenly faced with a language problem - that of being able to communicate their needs both at director and shop-floor level to steel companies in France.

Michael Ward has just mentioned the wise investment of a good training. In the first months after joining the company Anne was given practice and help in acquiring the specialised vocabulary of the steel trade by undertaking plenty of translation work and a crash secretarial course at the company's expense gave her basic typing skills which, however, as her ability in other fields has developed, she now rarely uses.

The benefits to the company of her being able to communicate in French with the customer or seller have been recognised by her company especially in 2 areas:

1. it establishes a good relationship more quickly in the initial stages of contact and a good impression is created from the start, and,
2. a fast and efficient exchange of information has to be the most cost-effective method of operating, and language ability has been shown without doubt to increase the speed of communication.

It is James Fairley's view that knowledge of a language should <u>not</u> be confined only to sales representatives. Until the order is completed and payment received, the administrative back-up in the customer's or supplier's language plays an all-important role.

Many employers fail fully to exploit the supply of language graduates available on the labour market. It is true they may not instantly be of use to the company but their degree qualifications should indicate that they can quickly assimilate new vocabulary and acquire other skills. The majority of today's language graduates spend a whole year abroad with an increasing number opting for work experience in preference to study at a university. Many spend 6 months in each of 2 countries, and there are now more graduates available with degrees combining a language with other skills.

From an International Development Team Manager
David James, General Manager, Car & Motorsport Development, Dunlop Limited

My principal responsibility within the Dunlop organisation is to manage the development of new ranges of car and motorcycle tyres. Although these products may eventually be produced and sold in many overseas territories, it is the European market and operating conditions which define the basic product specification; and our number one priority is to meet the exacting requirements of all the European vehicle manufacturers with a common product.

We are organised very much as an international team, and the responsibility for finalising the development of a particular product range could be allocated to any one of our teams in U.K., France or Germany. There is thus an obvious need for direct and frequent contact both within our own European organisation and with vehicle manufacturers, sales and service organisations and customers throughout Europe.

It is just possible for the U.K. members of my team to carry out their tasks with no language capability whatsoever. But the consequent misunderstandings, misinterpretations and, above all, lack of credibility would cause considerable delays in our development programmes and would nullify all attempts to create this feeling of a "European Team" which I consider so important in achieving our objectives.

As you might expect, our current situation is far from ideal. The engineers and technologists within our U.K.-based headquarters organisation have a wide range of ability and aptitude in communicating in other languages, ranging from fair fluency as a result of having been posted to one of our European locations for a period - down to half-remembered School French (or worse).

My objective, then, is to increase the language skills of the members of my U.K. team - particularly in French and German - as quickly and effectively as possible. From past experience I consider the traditional "evening class once-a-week" method as almost totally ineffective. It is very unusual for anyone to complete such a course - the most common reasons for giving up being that the pace was too slow, the class was overcrowded, lack of individual attention, subject matter irrelevant for the student's needs - and so on.

I am equally reluctant to opt for the total immersion course, with the students spending long periods at a language school - usually in a one-to-one teacher/student situation. The main drawbacks here are expense and the amount of working time taken up. It is, however, effective in breaking down the traditional British reticence and developing a good oral capability.

The solution which we have chosen, and the one which we hope to prove both

effective in developing fluency and most economical in cost and time, is to establish "in-house" courses, tailored to our particular requirements. Small groups of four or five students attend classes held on site on two evenings each week, the classes running from 4 to 6 o'clock. We expect the classwork to be backed up by private study, and place particular value on the use of tapes - finding these very effective if the student can make use of travelling time while driving by playing the tapes.

The advantages of the in-house course are considerable - both for the students and for the company. Most important is perhaps the association which we hope to create between the use of foreign languages and the normal working environment. If we are successful, speaking French or German will not be something to be done only on special occasions and in a separate remote classroom, it will be a working tool to be used just as readily as a calculator or a drawing board.

From the Negotiator
George Hardwick, Licensing Manager, GKN Screws and Fasteners Limited

My present job is concerned with licensing, that is the negotiation, completion and servicing of technology transfer agreements between GKN Screws and Fasteners Limited, and other parties.

The nature of the fastener licensing business is such that Europe is more profitable, to us, than England, thus foreign languages are an essential part of the work.

Furthermore, as face to face negotiations are involved, together with promotional activities such as trade exhibitions, advertising and customer presentations, it would be very expensive and difficult to use interpreters. This difficulty is increased due to the specialist technical knowledge involved in the products under discussion.

The nature of my job, therefore, necessitated that I learn a foreign language, and as the most complex but profitable area of involvement was Germany and also because I learnt some German in school - I learnt German.

I attended a language school which had a standard training method. By this I mean that a small group of people from various industrial backgrounds e.g. chemists, paint technologists, plastics engineers and myself learnt formal grammar together with conversational and, a small amount, of written language.

The advantages of the course were that we were away from the office, (with the common intent of learning a language) and so without the normal distractions which occur at work. In this way our thoughts were kept directed towards learning the language.

Its weakness was that working for eight hours per day, with evening revision work for five days per stretch, took one beyond saturation point and so reduced the effectiveness of the course.

However, even more important in my case was the lack of specialisation - because the group was dominated by students of other professions - my own particular specialist needs were barely touched on.

This is, I feel the failing of any standard course - the basics of grammar etc. are taught, but most people from industry learning a language have specialist needs, and their requirements cannot be met by courses which are not geared to those needs.

In my case this short-coming was made up by in-company tuition. For some time a 1½ hour twice weekly German session had been staged at GKN to a variety of different people.

Due to the need to improve the technical aspects of my German, but also in order to produce brochures, technical data video presentations and advertisements in German this in-house course was re-structured.

The use of a standard text book was foresworn and replaced by the actualities of business life. Sales correspondence was discussed and translated, technical magazine articles were similarly treated and the experiences of individuals at exhibitions, by way of customer queries was used to produce briefing handouts for use by overseas exhibition staff.

Because the people involved had a common background (that is, the same products and company structure) the sessions had far more impact and specific practical benefits.

For example, previous experience had shown that it took up to four years to negotiate initial licences - through the use of language trained personnel this has been reduced to one year.

The benefits of language trained personnel are therefore clear in our own particular activities.

I would however reaffirm my own thoughts on language training from the industrial point of view.

Languages should be taught to individuals who have the same product interests, so that they can use their experiences and convert them to useful exercises in the classroom, and the course should be structured to teach not only grammatical points but the language as used in the particular industrial field.

People in industry with language needs should therefore beware of buying standard intensive courses offering maximum tuition, because they are not suitable for many individuals and also because of their limited scope.

Alternatives are available, if one asks, and can be found at local colleges and universities who should be only too willing to have this type of contact with local industry.

Finally I would point out that not all text books are to be ignored. Now that the initial stages of our promotional activities have been passed our in-house course is interspersing particular requirements with an Export Marketing German text book that is proving particularly relevant to our existing needs.

In conclusion I can only reiterate the point of view of the converted that unfortunately there is no pill or injection one can take to become instantly fluent in a language. It's a question of perseverance and practice in a relevant sphere, but without making the effort, one risks finding the door closed

without being able to ask how to open it. Our previous experience was that it took 4 years to successfully conclude negotiations with overseas countries, but with language trained personnel this has been reduced to one year.

PROPOSALS FOR ACTION

In Industry

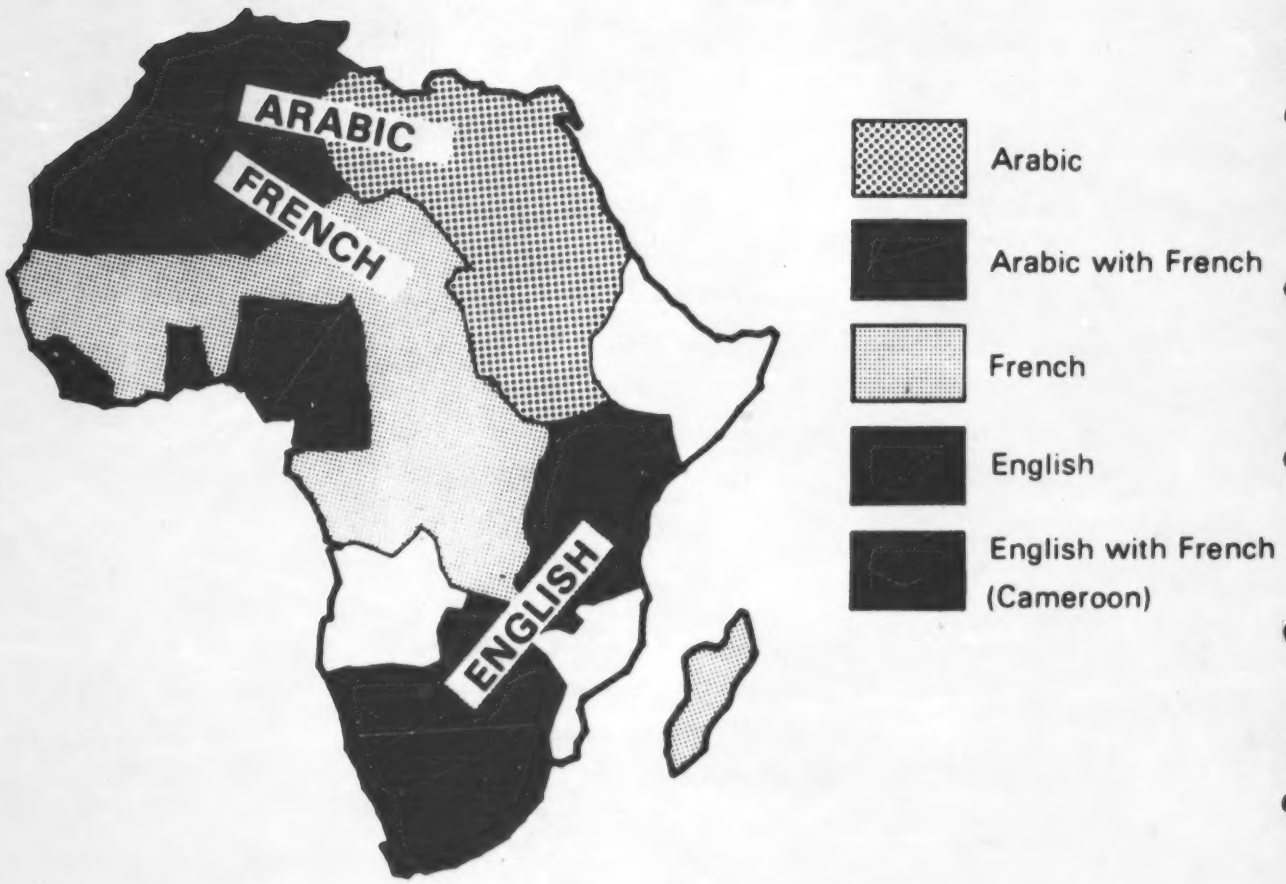
Anthony Frodsham, Director-General, Engineering Employers' Federation

In introducing and summing up proposals for action in the future, Mr. Frodsham emphasized the following points:

1) Employers should take language proficiency into account when considering people for senior posts. It should become known that the possession of such skills enhances career prospects.
2) Companies should record the language skills of employees and make optimum use of such skills.
3) Closer links should be maintained with Careers Advisers who could be invited into companies to see areas in which foreign languages are of use. In particular, they should be made aware of the benefits to engineers and technologists if they have a foreign language in addition to their technical ability. On the Continent of Europe, most countries ensure that at least one foreign language is continued to conversational 'A' level. The combination of language skills and technical knowhow are encouraged in many countries and the British should do likewise.
4) It is important that 'A' level foreign language syllabi should be reformed to place more emphasis on communicative skills and somewhat less on literature. The new A/O level examinations in French and German of the Oxford and Cambridge Joint Board are a step in the right direction, and schools should encourage their students to continue language studies into the sixth form with examinations such as these as the goal.
5) The help of the broadcasting and television companies should be enlisted in an effort gradually to bring about a change of public attitudes towards foreign languages. The inclusion at peak hours of a short item of news report would help create a wider awareness of other languages. In TV news and current affairs programmes, prominent foreigners speaking in their own language should be sub-titled with the reporter commenting afterwards.
6) There is a need for the development of a foreign language aptitude test which would be simple to administer. The method used by the Foreign Office could perhaps be examined and its relevance to industry and commerce evaluated.
7) In order to show in a positive way that language skills are valued, industry should donate a small sum of money for a prize for the encouragement of language studies in schools for the non-specialist linguist. The prize could take the form of equipment/books for language learning for the winning school.

8) The Engineering Employers' Federation was showing its commitment to foreign language schools by sponsoring students on a combined Engineering and Language degree course at the University of Surrey.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND HIGHER EDUCATION LANGUAGES IN AFRICA



PROPOSALS FOR ACTION

In Education

Peter Downes, Headmaster of Henry Box School, Witney

There can be no doubt that schools and the educational system have failed to produce the kind of linguists that industry and commerce need. Both in the quantity and type of students leaving school with a good linguistic basis, schools have fallen short. Urgent discussions are taking place at many levels to correct the imbalance: we shall be aiming to encourage more students to keep up their language work at a subsidiary level and we shall be seeking to influence the new examinations at 16+ and 18+ to make them give greater emphasis to communicative competence.

Schools will only do things that society expects of them. Help us to help you! There are a number of ways in which industry can help schools to provide the effective communicators that we need in a competitive world.

1. Stress the value of languages in your advertisements, interviews, promotions etc.

2. Industry in its links with the Careers Advisory Service, must put pressure on schools to offer languages more widely. Students take more notice of the Careers Advisor than of their parents or teachers! They should be told that even if they envisage a career in science or technology they should keep up their languages.

3. At national level, industry should use its influence through its representative on the Schools Council (Mr. Raeburn of BP). This is the body which shapes the examinations' structure of this country. Reform should be sought which allows for a wider range of study at 'A' level, so that languages may be continued in the Sixth Form for the non-specialist linguist.

4. Use any influence possible to increase the use of foreign languages in news items on radio and in particular on television at peak viewing hours. There is no need to blank out the foreign voice, and short news items direct from the continent could be included in the main news.

5. At a local level firms could consider funding an industrial secondment for a language teacher to undertake a detailed analysis of the kind of language help that firms need in exporting and report back to schools in the area.

6. Firms could also show the seriousness of their desire to encourage language teaching in schools by setting up a fund for a language prize in the form of equipment or a travel grant for schools running courses in which languages are seen as an ancillary skill. This would be inexpensive for

industry but a very welcome and encouraging gesture to schools wishing to introduce such courses.

The mismatch between the worlds of education and industry is seriously hampering our export performance. Cooperation and flexibility from both sides are essential if we are to make progress to strengthen us for the next decade.

(Summary)

PROPOSALS FOR ACTION

In the Field of Recruitment and Training
Professor Dennis Ager, Head of Department of Modern Languages
University of Aston in Birmingham

Peter Downes has looked at proposals and suggestions which affect those who come on to the employment market at age 16 or 19, and also affect those who intend to go on to Higher or Further Education and training in their formative years. I should like to deal first with suggestions affecting those who do extend their education in this way, and thus join the employment market at age 21 or 25; and also look at proposals touching those already in employment now, at whatever age. Not that I wish to imply that we are only concerned with the recruitment of graduates; although, like engineers, linguists are the better for a long, intensive, high-level education, a lot of useful and commercially viable work can be carried out without a degree in the relevant specialism.

Higher Education in universities and polytechnics has changed quite a bit over the last 10 years. Insofar as language degrees are concerned, these changes include:

- more attention being paid to <u>language</u> itself, and also to its use. Older degrees often concentrated on literary study to the exclusion of all else.

- more attention being paid to the spoken language.

- syllabuses being revised to include more on the social, political and economic institutions and condition of the relevant country; to include options on international marketing; to include sandwich periods of work in the relevant country.

- new combinations of subjects in Combined or Joint degrees: Mechanical Engineering, Physics, Biochemistry, Business Administration. Some degrees take <u>both</u> subjects to the same high level; others are one main subject, often with only a minor language component.

- some increase and yet a perhaps greater decrease in elementary or low-level language learning in science-based degrees. Professional institutes have abandoned foreign language requirements and TEC/BEC courses often ignore them. On the other hand new 'enhanced' or 'extended' engineering courses with management component have foreign languages built in.

It should be possible therefore to recruit language graduates with an appropriate foundation in business or technical subjects; with work experience and flexibility. Sadly, not enough 'pure' technical or business graduates are competent in even one foreign language; and particularly worrying is the fact that very few if any of the graduates is competent in anything but French. There are nowhere near enough in Russian, Japanese, Mandarin or the other

languages of the Far and Middle East, not enough in Portuguese or South American Spanish.

If not a graduate, then who? Sometimes the problem can be solved by hiring the specialist - the interpreter/translator, the agency; but they're expensive and their loyalties may well be elsewhere. Recruiting bilingual secretaries again may be the answer; it's not the answer to the salesman's problem, although it may be the answer to the salesman's dream. Recruiting native speakers from the supply of refugees, wives, friends and relatives is another possibility, provided their foreign language, English, is up to it. Proven ability to learn a language can often help in identifying potential; but 'O' level 20 years ago is not necessarily the best indicator. So it may be a question of identifying potential, of discovering who would be able to learn a new skill; and there are specific tests which claim to be able to do this.

Even without such a test it is often possible to pick out the potentially successful language learner; a reasonable degree of intelligence, strong (often very strong) motivation, tenacity are the main requirements; being an extrovert helps, personally secure and able to get on with people. And in learning a new language the experience of learning one before gives a head start.

But we are not talking about recruiting language learners; our new appointee must be able to do his basic job, in sales, finance, personnel or general management, and add to that the skills he requires to do the job better. Recruiting a good potential or actual linguist should mean recruiting a better executive.

What practical suggestions can one make then in this field of staff recruitment? How can industry influence those who train their recruits?

In influencing the educators and trainers to develop courses more in tune with the needs of industry and commerce the most effective persuader is undoubtedly practice and example. If every salesman recruited by an organisation over a set period has to have 'O' level French this fact alone is likely to have direct consequences on the teaching of school French; and in the same way the employability of graduates who have studied Business Administration and French is having an effect on degree courses both in French and in Management. Despite the apparent six-year lag (two years to plan a course and get it approved, four years from intake to graduation), changes in options and orientations can be obtained rather quicker.

Membership of University and Polytechnic Councils, Advisory Boards, Departmental Steering Committees and Liaison Groups opens the way to discussion of course content in a wider forum than the purely academic; and again indirect 'pressure' via public statements and encouragement for initiatives has remarkable repercussions.

More specifically support for work placements for students in training, either in overseas subsidiaries or on an exchange basis (offering a placement here for a German student so that a British student can find a place in German industry), although expensive in present circumstances, exercises a powerful influence on the educators.

Although here at this seminar we are mostly concerned with exports, the needs are not confined to front-line sales executives. Market research, analysing conditions and assessing trade and other journals; telephone and telex communication with suppliers; technical research and development and its information needs; the installation and maintenance of plant overseas are all activities immensely facilitated by ease in communication. And tasks which present the more difficult communication problems; so recruiting the right man with the right combination of skills has considerable importance.

As we enter a technologically different age, with its social consequences in terms of employment, increased social inequality, changes in the distribution of wealth internationally, and increased mobility, career patterns will change. Mid-career training and retraining is already no novelty; and the concept of an initial education and training 'package' which can last for a working life of thirty or forty years has disappeared.

Training and retraining in a specific skill such as foreign languages aimed at coping with a particular deficiency or perceived gap is often very popular with trainees. For some reason it appears less popular with training managers and chief executives. It's a long-term investment; it's sometimes expensive; its precise value to the company is not always immediately clear; because the British go abroad for their holidays it's often assumed that going abroad can be equated with having a good time - at the company's expense; and most of us have suffered bad or mediocre language teaching at school, and don't want to go through that again.

A long-term investment in German is not much use in breaking into the Chinese market - and the opportunity to do that may arise at quite short notice. Market conditions can vary dramatically while the trainee is still just embarking on his course; and language learning is hard work. And negotiating contracts, or discussing difficult legal or technical points, requires a command of language which just can't be obtained in a crash course.

So these are problems; what practical proposals can be put forward to assist in their definition and solution?

Even a fairly small organisation often contains within its members a quite surprising variety of skills; so a survey/audit of the skills which can be

drawn on in times of need is a starting point. And the world's languages can be divided, for commercial purposes, into English which more or less everybody has some knowledge of (except when you want to sell to him); French, German, Spanish, Italian - all of which are generally useful, so it would be helpful to make 'blanket' provision within a company of these four to ensure some availability; and the others for which special provision has to be made according to the actual and expected pattern of trade within the organisation.

The organisation of the company also dictates who needs the language and for which precise purposes; is it a matter of breaking the ice at initial sales presentations, or senior executives exploratory visits? Or follow-up work in technical discussions with experts or trainees; what are the precise communication tasks which will face those going abroad or meeting visitors here? And at what stage will expert translators/interpreters be required?

There is nothing to say that when precise requirements have been worked out they cannot be satisfied. Training institutions, whether in universities, polytechnics, colleges, private organisations or within the company itself, are very responsive to precisely formulated requirements, whether in terms of course objectives or timing, frequency and intensity of sessions. Within the West Midlands there are crash/intensive courses, slower-paced courses on the basis of an hour or two a week of instructor time; self-help or guided courses, long courses and short courses. Most generally advertised courses are general in content; but specific instruction in technical or other terminology is available, as are courses in language and civilisation or language and business. The provision in the West Midlands has been collated into the brochure you will find in the information dossier you have before you.

Many companies can, and do, use in-house facilities, appointing their own staff as language advisors/translators/teachers. Others use visitors, overseas subsidiaries or agents to provide them with the necessary practice.

In both recruitment and training the enthusiasm starts at the top; language learning is such a personal matter - a successful speaker changes his personality with his language - that the motivation to make progress in the national as well as the sectional interest has to be strong, and must start at the top.

PROPOSALS FOR ACTION

In Deployment of Resources

Keith Brauer, Director-General of the Institute of Sales Management

There is no substitute for the advantages enjoyed by those companies able to converse, correspond, think and sell in the commercial language of the relevant foreign market.

Considerable opportunities exist for increased trade in Europe and overseas. Whether the potential embraces joint ventures, bi or tri lateral barter, licenced manufacture, the appointment of stockists/distributors/agent or straightforward selling, success involved in beating the competition will be the easier for the enterprise possessing the relevant linguistic capability.

Many companies do, of course, already possess multilingual capabilities. There are, however, still a considerable number who do not. It does seem incredible that in 1981 companies dependent upon maintaining or increasing their exports permit their future viability to be placed in jeopardy.

For an investment of one thousand five hundred pounds a manager could be taught one of the major foreign commercial languages such as German or Spanish whilst the time required for tuition should not necessitate absence from the company of more than one week per month for twelve months. A small investment by any standards. Three managers, three languages could cost less than a whole page advertisement in one of the Sunday supplements.

Without the agreement and authorisation of the Chief Executive the acquisition of language selling skills can be difficult if not impossible. It is therefore vital that all who believe in the importance of exports should endeavour to ensure that their Chief Executives are convinced of and committed to the need for the company having a linguistic capability. How else can a firm be expected to successfully compete for business overseas in the face of multi-lingual competition? Whenever a company's future is dependent upon exports there really is no commercial excuse for any longer ignoring the need for commercial foreign languages.

(Summary)

CONCLUSION
by
Lord Limerick, Chairman of the British Overseas Trade Board

It is only too apparent that our exporters today are facing real and pressing problems in winning export business. Domestic costs have been increasing faster than those of many of our international competitors. Moreover, although our oil reserves are a blessing in one way - they have created a strong exchange rate which is not performance-related and compounds the difficulties of our exporters. However laudable, high interest rates which are needed to help bring down the inflation rate make things even more difficult for them.

Inflation is coming down but North Sea oil will be with us for some time and our exporters may well have to contend with a strong pound for the foreseeable future. The one question which the Board is confronted with more than any other is, "how can we continue to export when so many factors conspire to weaken our competitive position?" Apart from being more cost conscious, the advice we give is to pay more attention to the non-price factors such as design, quality and marketing which are, in our view, the key to maintaining and increasing export trade.

All aspects of marketing need attention but right in the centre of this subject is the need to be able to communicate with our customers in their own language. Up to recent times, partly dictated by history, with a large percentage of our exports going to English speaking countries, businessmen have not seen the need for foreign languages. But this has all changed for by far the greater proportion of our exports now go to non English speaking countries.

Just because foreigners have had the courtesy to address us in our own language for so long we have neglected to acquire the necessary skills to speak to them in their own languages. It is unfortunate as well as paradoxical that their very willingness to learn our language is the factor that has most inhibited our need to speak their languages. This must stem partly from the days when they wished to sell to us and it was in their interest to learn our language. But the boot is now on the other foot. It is in our interest to speak our customers' languages. Don't take seriously the often smugly expressed view, "Aren't we lucky that more and more foreigners speak English?" The very fact that they are doing this weakens our hold on even English-speaking markets which we hitherto thought to be secure. For example, the Japanese having mastered English are now able to go and sell in Nigeria.

One needs only to pose a simple question. Which would you prefer, a foreign salesman who made you speak his language or one who spoke English? I know what

my answer would be. However good their English, I am sure that our overseas customers are of the same disposition. A salesman who comes speaking the language of the customer must have a head start over those who don't. And that applies equally to all contacts, whether they be at Chairman/Managing Director level, between technical representatives, at financial or any other level. What about the telephone operator? How many firms have operators who can confidently handle telephone calls from overseas? Think of the benefits to company prestige if she could! The B.O.T.B. report pointed out that proposals in English might as well be in the waste-paper bin and showed the importance of having company literature in the local language.

The fact that our exports overall are holding up so well with all the current problems - both our own, domestically, and the current recession affecting much of that would suggest that our goods and services are attractive to our customers. How much better we might do with more efficient marketing techniques!

It was one of the objectives of the BOTB report "Foreign Languages for Overseas Trade" to stimulate interest in this subject and to get industry and education at regional and local level to work together to bring about an improvement in foreign language skills in industry. There have been a number of conferences and seminars since the Report was published but I was particularly interested today to hear the proposals for how these aims might be achieved. Sometimes we are too long on analysis of a problem and too short on remedial action. I hope these suggestions will bear fruit.

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Mr. D. Brower, Export Director, Worldwide Languages

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Mr. R. Savage, Chairman of the Regional Group of National Association of Language Advisors

Sir Norman Statham, HM Ambassador to Brazil (retired)

Mr. B.E. Stokes, Group Project Planning Director, Automotive Products Ltd

Mr. A.V. Toutoungi, Managing Director, Euro-lang

Mr. N. Travis, Personnel Manager, Massey Ferguson World Export Operations

Mr. C.J. Walliker, Director of Manpower, The Delta Metal Co. Ltd

Mr. M. Ward, Trading Manager, Courtaulds Central Trading Ltd

Mrs. C.M. Wilding, Research Assistant, Department of Modern Languages, University of Aston

THE INFORMATION DOSSIER

Participants at the seminar received an Information Dossier containing the following items:-

Programme

List of Participants

Language Services in the West Midlands

BOTB Report, Foreign Languages for Overseas Trade, May 1979

Report of a conference held at The Royal Society of Arts on October 31 1979

Report of a conference held for headteachers at the University of Aston, March 22 1980

Languages, Education and Industry: a Summary of Reports and Conferences, by Christine Wilding, March 1980

Foreign Languages in Industry, Commerce and Education - The Aston Experience, by D.E. Ager, E. Clavering and J. Galleymore, 1980

A copy of the relevant recommendations concerning foreign language teaching and exchanges, by the Education Committee of the Council of Europe, 1980

Communiqué - papers published by Worldwide Languages

Modern Languages in Education and Industry in North Staffordshire by R. Savage, County Advisory Officer Modern Languages, Staffordshire

A selection of brochures advertising language schools, translation services in the West Midlands and books for business language teaching etc.

Further copies of the dossier may be obtained from the Department of Modern Languages, University of Aston in Birmingham, Gosta Green, Birmingham B4 7ET. Price £10 including postage and packing and individual items are available on request.

THE UNIVERSITY
OF ASTON
IN BIRMINGHAM

Gosta Green, Birmingham B4 7ET/Tel:021 359 3611 Ex

FROM THE CHANCELLOR

18 May 1981

ML/DEA/CDK

Dear

You may be aware that since the publication by the BOTB of their report "Foreign Languages for Overseas Trade" compiled by a Study Group of industrialists, educationalists and members of the Civil Service and chaired by H.R.H. The Duke of Kent, several conferences and meetings have been held throughout the country in order to draw attention to their findings and examine its implications to industry, commerce and education.

Two such conferences have been held by the University of Aston in conjunction with members of the BOTB Study Group. The first, held on March 22nd 1980, was aimed particularly at the education sector - head teachers, careers advisors, heads of Modern Languages departments - and the second, on 12th January 1981 at Birmingham Chamber of Commerce - "The Language Key in Export Strategy" - was aimed at participants from industry and commerce.

In the discussions held on both these occasions participants felt that while recognising the efforts made by broadcasting and television authorities in the provision of language courses for the public, the slow process of changing national attitudes towards foreign languages in the long-term would be greatly assisted if the broadcasting and television companies were to adopt a more encouraging policy towards their use in parts of normal programmes. In particular the following suggestions were made:

i) that interviews with foreign language speakers should not be dubbed but should have sub-titles. The very process of dubbing and thus obliterating the sound of the foreign language has the psychological implication of demoting its value. People who knew the language welcomed the opportunities to practice their understanding and learn topical vocabulary.

ii) that brief items in the main European languages should be transmitted at peak viewing times; for instance, a brief news item from France, Germany, Spain or Italy or a comparison of the ways in which different countries were reporting the same item of news, could be slotted in at the end of the main news.

iii) the excellent news programmes in French and German (Télé-journal and Heute Direkt) were too late for the majority of those who would like to see them. Nonetheless, this venture was warmly welcomed by all present.

iv) it was important that British people should experience other languages as a normal part of everyday life as do many people on the continent, where in some countries English was learned in part through the great exposure to the language through the medium of television and radio. Similar views were expressed by Mr. H.E. Bell in a letter to The Times on February 20th 1981.

Attached you will find extracts from the report of the conference of 22nd March. It is my hope and that of others involved in these discussions that you will keep these recommendations in mind when planning future programme policy.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Cadbury.

Enc.

COPY OF LETTER SENT BY SIR ADRIAN CADBURY TO BROADCASTING AND TELEVISION COMPANIES, MAY 1981

GNP, EXPORT AND LANGUAGE

Eric Clavering, Department of Modern Languages, University of Aston

What languages do commerce and industry need? The question has to be asked by anyone planning language - and commercial - teaching. But no-one can say exactly: the complications are too great. We cannot go by the languages that businesses at present use: when a survey shows French at a low level as the most-used language it merely measures what is, unfortunately, the commonest qualification: people use what language they've got, not what they ought to have. Markets come and go, too - though not, it must be said, unforeseeably fast: it would take an impossible number of Irans to outweigh the last decade's inexorable increase of trade with Europe. Different markets have different language needs: it is fluent and accurate French which is essential in France, where other may be happy to trade in a virtual pidgin or in English. But even here the matter is not simple: salesmen may report that there is no language problem. They forget the gulf between the excellent English of the decision-makers and the monolingual foreman, and technicians following up may find language their greatest problem.

Over and above all this stand economic strategies and political matters. There are many more Chinese, Russians, South Americans and Japanese than there are French, but comparatively our trade with them is negligeable. Penetrating such markets is not of course primarily a language matter. Yet it cannot be an accident that the imbalance between Japanese sales in the UK and British in Japan is paralleled by the vast number of Japanese who know English and the tiny numbers of Englishmen who speak Japanese. There is no language widely known in Britain with whose speakers we do little trade.

A further complication is that language areas often coincide neither with states nor with markets. In Spanish South America Brazilian Portuguese is an odd man out: in Belgium, a very profitable market, the majority speak Dutch, not the French we tend to do business in. Does this matter? Perhaps not, but for the future there's no saying. But, in the end, behind all the imponderables of language planning lie two fundamental, measurable, and in the short term immutable, sets of facts: the numbers who speak each language and the wealth they collectively possess. It is at the least instructive to look at our language teaching in the light of these ultimate limits to market potential.

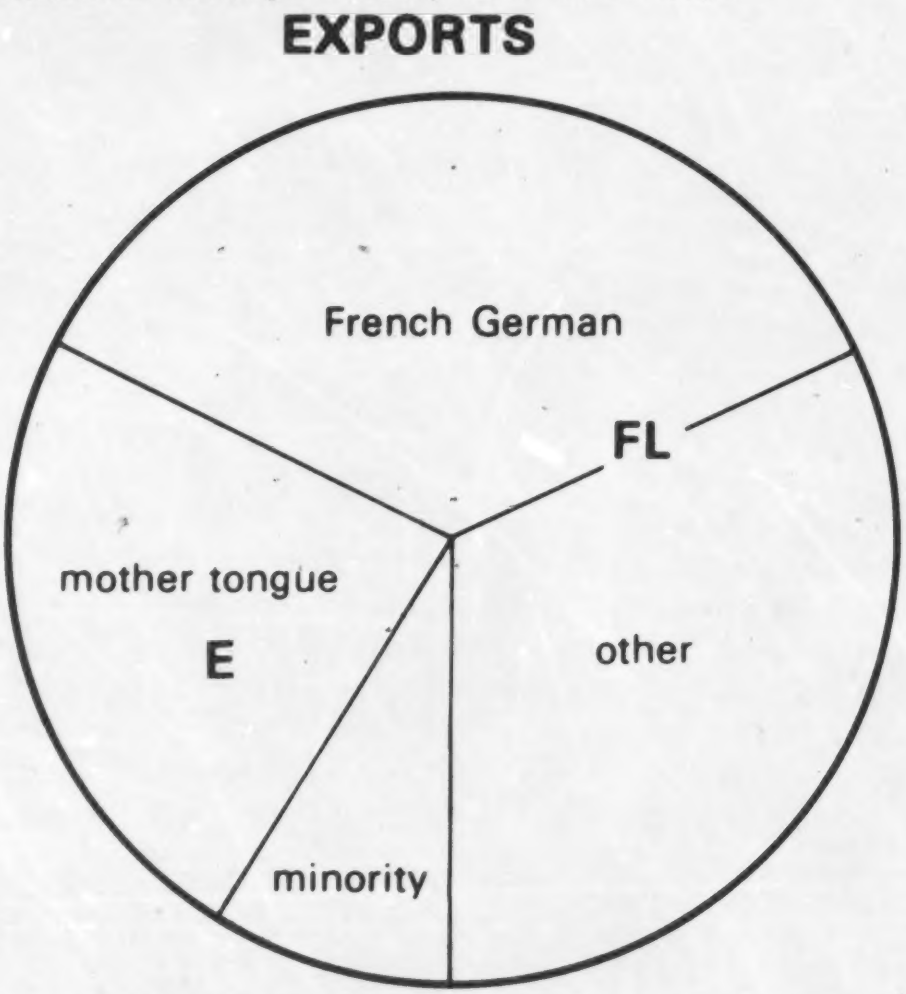
For this reason in the following diagrams trade figures, which usually appear as they are published state by state, have been redistributed in language areas. So far as is practicable, in all countries where more than one language has official status the population, our trade with them and their wealth, have

been redistributed in proportion to numbers of speakers. "German" therefore represents not only the Federal Republic, but also the GDR, Austria, and roughly four-fifths of the population of Switzerland. "French" trade gains by the addition of nearly a quarter of Canada's, but loses to "Dutch" more than half of Belgium's. These are of course only approximations: French Canadians may possibly have, per head, less buying power than their English-speaking fellow-countrymen, just as in Belgium Walloons may be less well-off than Flemings. Nevertheless the redistribution has its value: it demonstrates immediately, for instance, that we ought to be teaching far more German in our schools.

Export figures from Annual Abstract of Statistics, 1980 edition, Central Statistics Office (CSO No 116), Table 12.7, "External Trade".

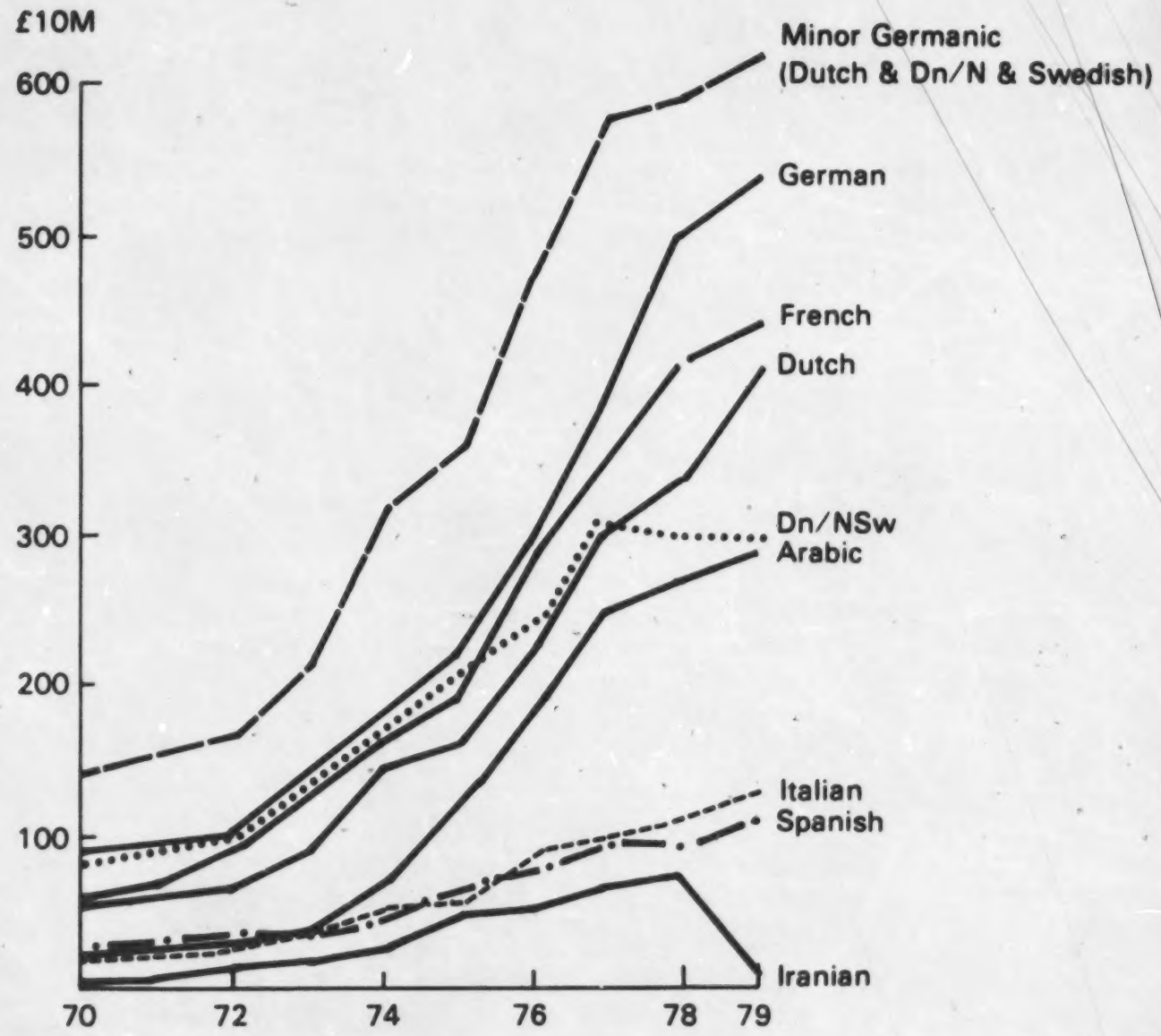
GNP's from The Europa Year Book 1980, Table "International Comparisons".

Graph of 1970-79 Contrastive Exports, Direction of Trade Year Book, International Monetary Fund 1980, Table "United Kingdom".



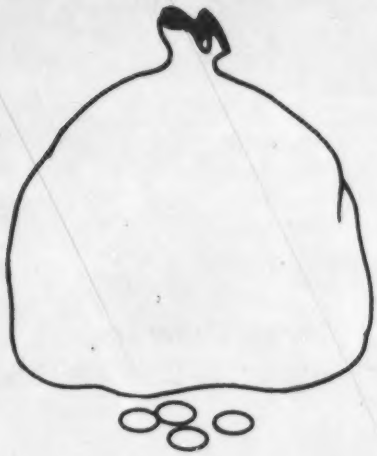
OF EVERY THREE OVERSEAS CUSTOMERS TWO SPEAK A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

ANNUAL EXPORTS 1970-1979

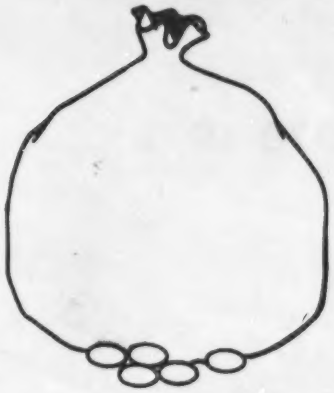


The languages the buyer speaks

EXPORT AND GNP



RUSSIAN
GNP = 965,520 £M
Export = 423



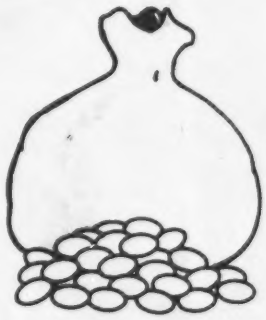
JAPANESE
GNP = 836,160 £M
Exports = 542

GERMAN
GNP = 799,965 £M
Export = 5003

FRENCH
GNP = 627,796 £M
Export = 4160

CHINESE
GNP = 448,550 £M
Taiwan = 93

SPANISH
GNP = 404,780 £M
Export = 954



ARABIC
GNP = 219,540 £M
Export = 2707

ITALIAN
GNP = 218,320 £M
Export = 1124

PORTUGUESE
GNP = 215,210 £M
Export = 508

DUTCH
GNP = 166,183 £M
Export = 3379

SWEDISH
GNP = 117,130 £M
Export = 1526

DAN & NOR
GNP = 88,910 £M
Export = 1492

POLISH
GNP = 128,330 £M
Export = 266

CZECH
GNP = 71,320 £M
Export = 73

MALAY & INDON
GNP = 71,050 £M
Export = 553

IRANIAN
GNP = 69,170 £M
Export = 751

SERBO CROAT
GNP = 52,346 £M
Export = 160

What they have. and what we get

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The Research Assistant, Christine Wilding at the Department of Modern Languages, University of Aston, would like to record and collate any surveys on language requirements in industry and commerce undertaken on a local or regional basis, and likewise, case studies of company language training policy and would be grateful for any information in this respect.